

# **The Origin of Cinco de Mayo**

Cinco de Mayo is Spanish for 5<sup>th</sup> of May. It was on this day in 1862 that the Mexican army, under the leadership of General Ignacio Zaragoza, defeated the French in the city of Puebla. This was an unexpected victory for the Mexicans, who were badly outnumbered and poorly equipped. The victory did not prevent the French from eventually capturing Mexico, but it was a glorious and motivating victory for the Mexican army, lifting the spirits of the entire nation and strengthening the Mexican feelings of unity and pride during the war.

Cinco de Mayo was originally celebrated only by a few Mexicans in the United States, but over the years, gained popularity throughout the country. Today, Cinco de Mayo is seen as a day to celebrate the Mexican culture and heritage in the United States. Interestingly, this holiday is celebrated on a much larger scale in the United States than it is in Mexico, where full-scale festivities are limited to the city of Puebla. Americans celebrate Cinco de Mayo with Mexican food, music and dance, sometimes dressing in traditional Mexican clothes and displaying Mexican décor for the occasion.

1. What does 'Cinco de Mayo' mean in Spanish?
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2. Who is General Ignacio Zaragoza?

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3. What was the outcome of the Battle of Puebla?

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4. Cinco de Mayo is one of the most important holidays in Mexico. True or false?

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5. What are some of the ways in which Cinco de Mayo is celebrated by Americans?

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6. How do you celebrate Cinco de Mayo?

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